

Youth

Adolescence is a time of experimentation for young men and women, and many who are exposed to alcohol and drugs give in to curiosity or temptation, with potentially damaging results. For instance:

- Today over half (54 percent) have tried an illicit drug by the time they finish high school.¹
- Three out of ten (29 percent) have used some illicit drug other than marijuana by the end of 12th grade.²
- Alcohol use remains extremely widespread among today's teenagers. Four out of every five students (80 percent) have consumed alcohol (more than just a few sips) by the end of high school and about half (51 percent) have done so by 8th grade.³
- In 2001, approximately 10.1 million persons aged 12 to 20 reported drinking alcohol in the past month.⁴
- Approximately 2 million youths aged 12 to 17 (nine percent) had used inhalants at some time in their lives as of 2001.⁵
- In 2001, 3.7 percent of 12th graders reported using steroids in their lifetime. That is an increase of 1.2 percent from 2000.⁶

Unfortunately, these trends in substance abuse often lead to more serious problems for young men and women, including academic difficulties, health-related problems, eating disorders, poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Mental/emotional disorders such as depression, developmental delays, conduct problems, personality disorders, suicidal thoughts, apathy, withdrawal, and other psychological dysfunctions frequently are linked to substance abuse among adolescents. Moreover, many substance-abusing youths engage in behavior that places them at risk of HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy, and sexual violence.⁷

Studies show that about half of all adolescents receiving mental health services have a co-occurring substance use disorder, and as many as 75-80 percent of adolescents receiving inpatient substance abuse treatment have a co-existing (e.g., co-occurring) mental disorder.⁸ In response to this problem, the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) completed a **Report to Congress on the Prevention and Treatment of Co-occurring Substance Abuse Disorders and Mental Disorders**. In this report SAMHSA outlines the scope of the problem, identifies current treatment approaches, best medical practices, and seeks to highlight prevention opportunities. Also, included in the report is the recommendation that



"I have been public about my addiction and recovery for almost a year. I'm still amazed by the reaction. Often the response is shock and bewilderment. These reactions result from society's stereotype of alcoholics and addicts, but I am neither a 'drunk on the corner,' nor a social or academic failure. I have dreams for the future."

—**Molly Potter**
Student

prevention and treatment services for co-occurring disorders must be culturally competent and age and gender appropriate.⁹

What can be done? Substance abuse treatment programs specifically designed for adolescents, as well as family-oriented approaches, can make a difference. For example, a national study of community-based treatment programs for adolescents found that reported weekly marijuana use dropped by more than half in the year following treatment. Clients also reported less heavy drinking, less use of hard drugs, and less criminal involvement. Other benefits included better psychological adjustment and improved school performance after treatment.¹⁰

Making a Difference: What Can I Do?

- 1. Recognize the Signs of Addiction.** If you are regularly interacting with young people, it is important to know about the symptoms of substance abuse. Be on the lookout for the following warning signs, which may indicate that alcohol or drugs have become a part of an adolescent's life:
 - Sudden changes in personality without another known cause
 - Loss of interest in once-favorite hobbies, sports, or other activities
 - Sudden decline in performance or attendance at school or work
 - Changes in friends and reluctance to talk about new friends
 - Deterioration of personal grooming habits
 - Difficulty in paying attention, forgetfulness
 - Sudden aggressive behavior, irritability, nervousness, or giddiness
 - Increased secretiveness, heightened sensitivity to inquiry
- 2. Take Advantage of the Power of Parenting.** As a parent or legal guardian of an adolescent, make all efforts to become a "hands-on" parent, consistently establishing rules and expectations for your teen and regularly monitoring his or her behaviors. Parent power is the most underutilized tool in combating substance abuse. Nearly one in five teens (18 percent) lives with "hands-off" parents—parents who fail to consistently set down rules and expectations—and faces four times the risk of substance abuse as teens with "hands-on" parents. In a 2000 survey, far more teens who had not tried marijuana credited their parents (49 percent) with this decision than any other influence.¹¹
- 3. Address the Specialized Treatment Needs of Youth.** When referring youth with alcohol or drug problems to treatment and recovery services, make every effort to identify programs that are specifically designed for their age group. Adolescents have special developmental needs and benefit from treatment approaches that increase their motivation and commitment to recovery.¹² Treatment approaches should also be tailored to take into account the child's age, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, family structure, cognitive and social development, and readiness for change.¹³ Sober schools that provide an alcohol- and drug-free learning environment are available in some parts of the country for students in recovery.

In addition, because young people with substance abuse problems are also often suffering from mental disorders, there is a critical need for concurrent psychiatric treatment, both during and following treatment.¹⁴

4. **Open the Lines of Communication.** If you have direct contact with young men and women, take the opportunity to become a mentor—an authority figure whom young people in your community feel comfortable with and can turn to for advice, for help with problems, and as an advocate for their positions. Children who live in alcohol- and drug-dependent families learn not to trust adults. By offering your time and an open ear to provide assurance and validation, you can counteract much of that mistrust and make a positive impact on a child's life.¹⁵
5. **Offer Training in Schools.** Educators who interact with youth on a daily basis can have a tremendous impact on their students by modeling positive behaviors, providing guidance and support on a personal level, building self-esteem, and helping them to make smart decisions. Schools can support treatment efforts and help youth suffering from co-occurring disorders by offering training for all administrators, teachers, coaches, counselors, nurses, and other school staff to spot the signs of substance abuse and mental disorders and know how to respond; providing strong no-use messages every year from preschool through the 12th grade, tailored to the age, culture, and sophistication of the child; developing and enforcing strong and commonsense substance abuse and treatment policies; improving and expanding existing prevention and intervention programs; and creating a school environment to engage parents (family members) in each child's education. School personnel should develop student attachment to schools, and help students build supportive peer groups so they can resist negative peer pressures.¹⁶

Making a Difference: How Can I Focus My Efforts During Recovery Month?

September 2003 marks the 14th annual observance of **Recovery Month**, promoting the effectiveness of substance abuse treatment nationwide. People who interact with young men and women on a regular basis, including parents, teachers, youth group leaders, coaches, clergy, counselors, health professionals, social workers, and others, can all take actions to contribute to this national education effort. Adults should support youth in need of treatment and recovery services, and those who are suffering from co-occurring disorders. Following are a few suggestions:

1. **Personalize Addiction.** Encourage young people in recovery who are willing to share their stories with others to speak to their peers by conducting presentations at area schools. In addition, a young person could author a first-person account of his or her experience in an article for placement in a school newspaper or a local community newspaper.
2. **Get the Word Out.** Distribute educational information about alcohol and drug addiction and treatment to young people directly by setting up an exhibit booth in high-traffic areas in your community such as shopping centers, grocery stores, public libraries, places of worship, county or state fairs, coffeehouses, book stores, movie theaters, and large-arena concerts. Hand out flyers with information about effective treatment options and contact numbers for local substance abuse recovery programs.

3. **Unite the Community.** Establish a substance abuse treatment task force that can address alcohol- and drug-related issues that face your community and support and expand existing treatment and recovery services. Enlist the participation of leaders of relevant organizations who care about youth and have an interest in this issue, such as representatives from the treatment community, criminal justice system, religious institutions, social and child welfare services, educational system, and parenting organizations as well as policymakers.
4. **Equip Parents with the Facts.** Conduct an informational seminar for parents, grandparents, stepparents, foster parents, and legal guardians to educate them on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of substance abuse, what to do if they suspect their child has a problem, and where to turn for help in their community for counseling and treatment services. Publicize the seminar through local newspapers and by posting flyers at area schools, in grocery stores, community centers, libraries, and other central locations. There are many resources available that can help parents and other adults who encounter youth on a daily basis. One resource is SAMHSA/CSAT's *A Quick Guide to Finding Effective Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment* (Publication Number: PHD877). Another resource is SAMHSA/CSAT's *You Can Help: A Guide for Caring Adults Working with Young People Experiencing Addiction in the Family* (Publication Number: PHD878). Order free copies and other materials by contacting SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) at 1-800-729-6686 or 301-468-2600 or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD).
5. **Put the Kids to Work.** Work with a local youth-related organization to organize a poster, song, or essay contest for young people during **Recovery Month** highlighting the importance of substance abuse treatment. Work with area schools to encourage student participation, encourage a local radio station to promote the contest to its listeners as a public service, and enlist businesses in the community to demonstrate their support by donating prizes.

You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for *Recovery Month* 2003 with SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official *Recovery Month* web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov>.

We would like to know about your efforts during *Recovery Month*. Please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form enclosed in the kit. Directions are included on the form.

For any additional *Recovery Month* materials visit our web site at <http://www.recoverymonth.gov> or call 1-800-729-6686.

Additional Resources

Federal Agencies

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201
877-696-6775 (Toll-Free)
www.hhs.gov

HHS, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
5600 Fishers Lane
Parklawn Building, Suite 13C-05
Rockville, MD 20857
301-443-8956
www.samhsa.gov

HHS, SAMHSA
National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20847-2345
800-729-6686 (Toll-Free)
800-487-4889 (TDD) (Toll-Free)
877-767-8432 (Spanish) (Toll-Free)
www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

HHS, SAMHSA
National Directory of Drug Abuse and Alcoholism Treatment Programs
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

SAMHSA National Helpline
800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) (Toll-Free)
800-487-4889 (TDD) (Toll-Free)
877-767-8432 (Spanish) (Toll-Free)
(for confidential information on substance abuse treatment and referral)
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

HHS, SAMHSA
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockwall II
Rockville, MD 20857
301-443-5052
www.samhsa.gov

HHS, SAMHSA
Center for Mental Health Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Parklawn Building, Room 17-99
Rockville, MD 20857
301-443-2792
www.samhsa.gov

HHS, SAMHSA
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Initiative
301-443-1845
www.samhsa.gov

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)
National Institutes of Health (NIH)
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, MD 20892
301-496-4000
www.nih.gov

HHS, NIH
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
Keeping Kids Alcohol Free Campaign
Willco Building
6000 Executive Boulevard
Bethesda, MD 20892-7003
301-443-3860
www.niaaa.nih.gov

HHS, NIH
 National Institute on Drug Abuse
 Office of Science Policy and Communication
 6001 Executive Boulevard
 Room 5213 MSC 9561
 Bethesda, MD 20892-9561
 301-443-1124
 Telefax fact sheets: 888-NIH-NIDA (Voice) (Toll-Free)
 or 888-TTY-NIDA (TTY) (Toll-Free)
www.drugabuse.gov

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (ED)
 400 Maryland Avenue, SW
 Washington, DC 20202-6123
 800-872-5327 (Toll-Free)
www.ed.gov

ED, Safe and Drug-Free Schools
 400 Maryland Avenue, SW
 Washington, DC 20202-6123
 202-260-3954
www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ)
 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20530-0001
 202-353-1555
www.usdoj.gov

DOJ, Drug Enforcement Administration
 Demand Reduction Section
 600 Army Navy Drive
 Arlington, VA 22202
 202-307-7936
www.dea.gov

Other Resources

Al-Anon/Alateen
 For Families and Friends of Alcoholics
 Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.
 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway
 Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617
 888-4AL-ANON/888-425-2666 (Toll-Free)
www.al-anon.alateen.org

Alcoholics Anonymous
 475 Riverside Drive, 11th Floor
 New York, NY 10115
 212-870-3400
www.aa.org

American Psychological Association
 Policy and Advocacy in the Schools
 750 1st Street, NE
 Washington, DC 20002-4242
 800-374-2723 (Toll-Free)
 202-336-6123 (TTY)
www.apa.org

Child Welfare League of America
 440 1st Street, NW, 3rd Floor
 Washington, DC 20001
 202-638-2952
www.cwla.org

Children's Defense Fund
 25 E Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20001
 202-628-8787
www.childrensdefense.org

Join Together
 One Appleton Street, 4th Floor
 Boston, MA 02116-5223
 617-437-1500
www.jointogether.org

Latino American Youth Center
 1419 Columbia Road, NW
 Washington, DC 20009
 202-319-2225
www.layc-dc.org

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
 1025 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 1200
 Washington, DC 20036
 202-974-2497
www.madd.org

National Asian Pacific American
Families Against Substance Abuse
340 East 2nd Street, Suite 409
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-625-5795
www.napafasa.org

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
11426 Rockville Pike, Suite 100
Rockville, MD 20852
888-55-4COAS (888-554-2627) (Toll-Free)
www.nacoa.org

National Association for Equal Opportunity
in Higher Education
8701 Georgia Avenue, Suite 200
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-650-2440
www.nafeo.org

National Association of School Psychologists
4340 East West Highway, Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-657-0270
www.nasponline.org

National Association of Social Workers
750 1st Street NE, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20002-4241
202-408-8600
800-638-8799 (Toll-Free)
www.socialworkers.org

National Association of State Alcohol
and Drug Abuse Directors
808 17th Street, NW, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20006
202-293-0090
www.nasadad.org

National Council on Alcoholism
and Drug Dependence, Inc.
20 Exchange Place, Suite 2902
New York, NY 10005-3201
212-269-7797
800-NCA-CALL (Hope Line) (Toll-Free)
www.ncadd.org

National Education Association—Health
Information Network
1201 16th Street, NW, Suite 521
Washington, DC 20036
202-822-7570
www.neahin.org

National Indian Child Welfare Association
5100 SW Macadam Avenue, Suite 300
Portland, OR 97239
503-222-4044
www.nicwa.org

National Latino Children's Institute
1325 North Flores Street, Suite 114
San Antonio, TX 78212
210-228-9997
www.nlci.org

National PTA Drug and Alcohol Abuse
Prevention Project
330 North Wabash Avenue, Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
800-307-4782 (Toll-Free)
www.pta.org

Partnership for a Drug-Free America
405 Lexington Avenue, Suite 1601
New York, NY 10174
212-922-1560
www.drugfreeamerica.org

2003

Youth *(cont.)*

Targeted Outreach

Phoenix House
164 West 74th Street
New York, NY 10023
212-595-5810
www.phoenixhouse.org

Wellbriety for Youth Movement
P.O. Box 6201
Scottsdale, AZ 85261
877-871-1495 (Toll-Free)
www.whitebison.org

Sources

- 1 *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use, Overview of Key Findings, 2001*. NIH Publication No. 02-5105. Bethesda, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2002.
- 2 *ibid.*
- 3 *ibid.*
- 4 *Summary of Findings from the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 02-3758. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2002.
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 *Monitoring the Future: National Results on Adolescent Drug Use, Overview of Key Findings, 2001*.
- 7 *Drug Identification and Testing in the Juvenile Justice System*. Ann H. Crowe, Editor. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, May 1998.
- 8 Greenbaum, P., Foster-Johnson, L., and Petrila, A. Co-occurring addictive and mental disorders among adolescents: Prevalence research and future directions. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 66(1), 1996.
- 9 *Report to Congress on the Prevention and Treatment of Co-occurring Substance Abuse Disorders and Mental Disorders*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2002.
- 10 Hser, Y., Grella, C., Hsieh, S., and Anglin, M.D. *National Evaluation of Drug Treatment for Adolescents*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California at Los Angeles Drug Abuse Research Center. Paper presented at the College on Problems of Drug Dependence Annual Meeting, June 1999.
- 11 *National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VI: Teens*. New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University, February 2001.
- 12 Gordon, S.M. *Adolescent Drug Use: Trends in Abuse, Treatment and Prevention*. Wernersville, PA: Caron Foundation, 2000.
- 13 *Teen Tippers: America's Underage Drinking Epidemic*. New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University, February 2002.
- 14 Foxhall, K. Adolescents aren't getting the help they need. *Monitor on Psychology* 32(5), June 2002.
- 15 *You Can Help: A Guide for Caring Adults Working with Young People Experiencing Addiction in the Family*. DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 03-3785. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2001.
- 16 *Malignant Neglect: Substance Abuse and America's Schools*. New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University, August 1997.